

Daily Assignment

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Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Daily Assignment #10: Birthday Celebrations

Handling students' birthdays can be a challenge. Parents' plans for their child's celebration in the classroom can be very different from what you are willing to handle. Invitations, alone can be a major problem. So, let me offer a strategy.

First, make it clear to parents that no invitations can be passed out in the classroom, or outside the classroom door. I understand the reasoning for parents doing this--not having mailing addresses or emails, mostly for convenience.

However, it can create chaos in the classroom. If one child is not included the teacher must deal with the hurt feelings for the entire day. If a child loses their invitation, again, the classroom teacher must deal with the problem.

Second, let the parents know that all children will be treated the same for their birthdays. Parents may send in finger type snacks, e.g. munchkins, cookies, cupcakes, to be shared at snack time or sometime during the day, at which time the class will sing "Happy Birthday" to the child. Make it clear to parents that cakes, ice cream, drinks and party favors and, yes, even birthday parties, are unmanageable. They are time consuming, messy and can make other students feel uncomfortable about what their families can provide. It is also unnecessary for parents to be present during this time.

Notify all parents well in advance of the first celebration.

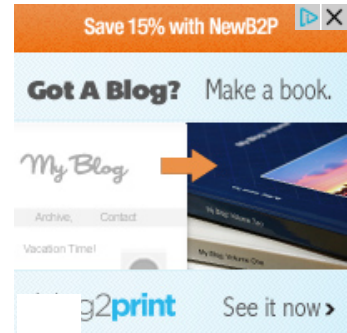
On another note, for the next few weeks, I will be without internet access, maybe. If possible, I will continue my blog, but it may not be possible. Please continue to check and know, I will definitely be back on October 10th.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 3:13 AM No comments:



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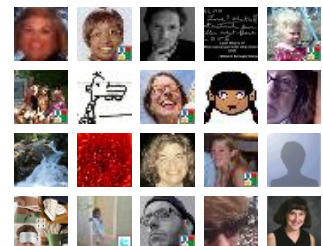
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Sunday, September 19, 2010

Daily Assignment #9: Open House

Aaaahh, Open House. In the past, I would fear Open House. I could easily stand in front of a room full of children and be comfortable, but put me in front of a room full of adults and I would have butterflies, my face would turn red, and so on. It wasn't pretty.

Parents have come to Open House to know about their child's day, what to do for birthdays, how to drop their child off in the morning and pick him/her up at the end of the day, what will parent-teacher communication look like, and the all important, homework schedule. Having said that, please know, they also want to see you.

Here is a format I used to avoid folks seeing my nervousness, which became a mainstay of my Open House presentations. A few days before the Open House take photos of the classroom, of the students during meeting time, reading, math, science, social studies, snack time, recess, etc... Include each child in at least one photo. (Parents will notice if their child is not in a photo.) Make a slideshow or a powerpoint presentation of the photos. For each slide describe what is happening. Make notecards for yourself, so that you are sure to hit all the important information.

Leave about 15 minutes, at the end, for questions and comments. If you feel challenged by a question or comment, feel free to say, "I need to think about that and get back to you." Always think positive intentions.

Providing refreshments helps to make parents feel welcome.

Don't forget to breathe and smile!

Daily Assignment #10 will be on how to handle birthday celebrations

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:24 PM 1 comment:

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About Me

[linda103](#)

Educator for 34 years. Classroom teacher- grades 1,2,3,5,6. Educational consultant for 18 years teaching a graduate level course on effective teaching strategies.

[View my complete profile](#)

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Daily Assignment #8: Lessons 3&4 for Establishing Classroom Rules

For Lesson 3, you will need a large floor plan of the school playground and cafeteria. As a whole group, have the students design rules for each floor plan (try to combine some), e.g. no throwing food in the cafeteria, only go down the slide, no hitting. With each suggestion have a quick discussion, "If this was done would it be respectful or disrespectful? What would disrespectful/respectful behavior look like?" An example might be: Rule: Only go down the slide. "Is that being disrespectful or respectful?" "Respectful." "Who are you respecting?" "Friends." "What would disrespectful behavior look like?" "Going up the slide." "Who are you disrespecting?" "Friends."

Point out that different behaviors are necessary for different spaces. But there is one behavior that seems to be very important. "What is that behavior?" As Aretha Franklin would say, R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

Lesson 4 pulls it all together. You will need a large floor plan of the classroom. As a whole group, have the students design rules for the class. Process with the group and see if any of them can be combined. Have the same discussion for each rule, as you did in Lesson 3.

Hopefully, they will recognize the importance of always being respectful and that that is the key to all appropriate behavior. Students may want to keep all the rules up. Make sure the word RESPECT is on the chart in large letters.

Post all the charts so that the students can see their progression through this process.

Remember, you are the model of the behaviors you want your students to demonstrate (so, don't go up the slide). And, they are watching. They are watching to see how you speak to colleagues, as well as to them. Also, remember to watch your body language.

More on body language another time.

This unit, and the books that go with it, can be used at almost every grade level.

The older students will enjoy revisiting picture books or old favorites and the younger grades always love a story. So, please don't hesitate to experiment with this unit.

Daily Assignment #9 will be on the all important --- OPEN HOUSE! It's coming up.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:00 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, September 12, 2010

Daily Assignment #7:A Unit for

Establishing Rules for the Classroom

There are many ways to develop rules for a classroom. Some teachers have a set list of rules. Some teachers follow the guidelines of Responsive Classroom in establishing rules.

I chose to work with the students on developing "The Rule." That's right, one rule. I know that is shocking, but it only takes one rule. And it is "RESPECT EACH OTHER!"

I would like to share with you a unit that I designed for establishing "The Rule." This unit has 4 lessons but may take 4-6 days to complete.

Select 3 books which reflect some form of chaos in an environment. I chose The Mystery of the Red Mitten, by Steven Kellogg; Noah's Ark, by Peter Spier and Old MacDonald Had An Apartment House, by Judith Barrett.

Divide the class into 3 groups. Depending on the grade level, have the students, or an adult, read one of the stories to a group. Each group should have a large sheet of paper with an outline of the environment depicted in the story they are reading, e.g. red mitten, ark, apartment house.

Before the stories are read, ask the students to think about "What might one rule have been, for the characters in the story, to prevent all the chaos?"

Establish roles within the group, e.g. summarizer of the story, rule presenter/s, recorder/s, timekeeper. Some jobs may have more than one student.

After the groups have read their story, they are to write down all the rules they thought about onto the large paper, (establish a minimum and maximum amount of rules because it can get out of control, or you might end up with nothing). Depending on the age group, someone will need to be the recorder. This part of the lesson may take 20-30 minutes. Setting a timer will help to move the conversation along and keep the groups focused, hence a timekeeper.

While students are waiting for groups to finish, the other groups may draw details on their large paper, e.g. staircase, animals, etc...

When all groups have completed listing their rules, bring the class back together and have each group do a presentation. Begin with story summarizer, then presenter/s of rules. Process the 3 groups' work and list the common rules, while also pointing out that each environment had different rules as well. Use the word "respect" while processing. Post charts.

This lesson may take 2 days, depending on the age/grade of students.

For homework, have the students list rules for their home. On the following day, process the homework with the students. What are the common rules? Which rules are family specific? Again, use the word "respect". You might also put them back into their groups and have them come up with the answers to the 2 questions. Then process as a whole group. Post the homework.

On Wednesday, I will explain the next 2 lessons in this unit.
I hope you will let me know how this goes.

Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 5:47 PM No comments:



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Wednesday, September 8, 2010

Daily Assignment #6 : Notices/Homework

If you are reading this, Congratulations, you have made it through the first day of school and you still want to teach!!!!

I would like to share with you an organizational strategy for sending School Notices and homework home.

The custodian, at my school, would always say he knew more about my classroom than parents because he always found the notices and homework on the floor.

So, clearly I needed a new strategy for notices and homework assignments going home and coming back.

Have a pocket folder for each student, labeled with their name in one corner and Homework written on the center of the folder. On the pockets, on one side write "home" and on the other write "school." Any notices/homework assignments that were to go home, you guessed it, went on the home side and, I think you can figure out the rest. Have a basket large enough to hold all folders near the door of the classroom, along with a class list. As students come in the next day, have them put their folders in the basket and check their names off the list. Simple, and yet, basic skills are being taught, e.g. organization, responsibility, to mention a few.

The first day you try this, there are several steps you will need to do. First, write a letter to parents letting them know about this strategy/routine. Then you must teach your students how to do the routine.

Remember: 1. Name it.

2. State it's purpose.

3. Model how it will look-- what the folder will look like; how they should take the papers out when they get home; how it will look when they complete their homework; making sure their name is on the papers; how to put papers back in the folder neatly; how to put the folder in the basket when they return to school and how to check their name off the list.

4. Have the students practice with a partner.

5. Give feedback

6. Practice

Now send it home. Are you exhausted yet?

I know some of you are saying that this is way too elementary. Trust me, it isn't. Kids may role their eyes and giggle, but they will remember.

Okay, on the next day, everybody gets it right! YEA!! You are awesome, which is probably what you're thinking, but in order to keep this routine successful, you must be tenacious about the steps.

Let's say it doesn't work the next day, what do you do. Re- teach. Sometimes it takes many reteaching lessons, but if it is important to you, you need to be tenacious.

If you're not, the students perceive that you don't care. This is not a good precedent to set.

So, give it a lot of thought. Figure out if this is a strategy that is important to you and would make your life a little easier if you put in the effort now.

Let me know how it goes.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 8:01 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, September 5, 2010

Daily Assignment #5- Introducing a Descriptive Graphic Organizer

In the last post, I described the Artifact Bag (a.k.a. All About Me Bag) and how to implement it. Tonight's assignment is how to take it up a notch by adding a visual tool to represent a higher level thinking skill--Recognizing Attributes or, it could also be, Identifying Characteristics and Deductive Thinking.

That was a mouth full.

Before you present this activity to your students make sure you :

1. tell them you will be using a descriptive organizer
2. describe it's purpose
3. show them how it will be used

For each student you should prepare an 8 1/2 x 11 heavy piece of paper by drawing a circle in the center about 3 inches in diameter, then draw 4 lines coming out from the circumference line. At the end of each line draw a small rectangle. As you share an Artifact Bag, (a.k.a. All About Me Bag), write on the rectangle what the object is and on the lines write the students' guesses as to what that object tells them about the person. If the students guess who the person is, write their name in the center circle. If they don't guess correctly, put the objects back in the bag and put the graphic organizer aside for another time. Also, somewhere on the paper add their photos once they have been guessed.

You have just introduced the Descriptive Graphic Organizer, and modeled it for the class, 20-30 times. Probably, depending on the age group, the students may be able to do this activity, as the teacher, after 10-15 times with the teacher modeling the steps.

Think of all the wonderful skills you have introduced by doing this activity, e.g. community building, higher level thinking skills, and possibly leadership roles.

Now, you have a great beginning of the year bulletinboard. As students are guessed, put their self- portraits (see Daily Assignment #3), descriptive graphic organizer and photo together on display. Everyone loves to see the comparison of the self portrait and photo, plus they get to learn a little something about your students/class.

Please let me know how your first week is going. Questions are welcome.

Best Effort,
linda103

Posted by linda103 at 3:48 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, September 1, 2010

Daily Assignment #4 Community Building Activity "Artifact Bags"

I would like to share with you a community building activity. This makes a great 1st homework assignment. The name of this activity is "Artifact Bags" or "About Me Bags." I have used this strategy with first and second graders, as well as adults.

Each student will need a brown paper lunch bag. They are to place 4 objects inside which represent themselves. For example, I would put a small book to represent my love for reading, a tiny fake apple for teaching, a piece of chocolate for my love of chocolate and small set of knitting needles for, you guessed it, knitting. Have them put a photo of themselves in the bag as well. No names.

Collect all the bags in a large decorated box. Throughout the first 2 weeks of school you will share these bags with the whole class and they will guess who the person is, based on the contents. If the class guesses correctly then you take the photo out. If they don't guess correctly, you put everything back into the bag and you do that one again another time.

You have to prep the students before you begin because they get very excited when there bag is being shared and give away who it belongs to. So, you need to talk to them about body language and not calling out what the objects represent.

This is a great strategy for students to discover what they have in common with each other. It helps everyone to learn something they may not know about their friend.

Don't forget to include a bag for yourself.

My next blog will be how to take this up a notch with a graphic organizer.
Best Effort,
Linda

Posted by linda103 at 5:26 PM No comments: 

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Teacher Lingo



Daily Assignment

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